



Town of Westford Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

December 2023



Kristen Las
Town
Manager

klas@westfordma.gov
www.westfordma.gov/tm
978-692-5500

Sign up to
receive latest town
updates:

[Subscribe to
Notifications](#)



Sign up for Emergency
Notifications:



Smart911™

Tuesday, January 23, 2024
Deadline for Petition
Articles To Town Clerk's
Office

Saturday, March 23, 2024
Annual Town Meeting
Westford Academy

Happy Holidays!

Dear Westford residents,

December is a month of celebration for most. I wish you all Happy Holidays in however you celebrate. If you find that you are struggling during this time financially or mentally, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Town's Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette or Social Worker, Alison Christopher. I also always look forward to December 21st as I know that daylight is slowly going to get a little bit longer.



The Select Board and I had the pleasure of cooking breakfast for over 70 seniors on December 6th at the Cameron Senior Center. There was joy in the air and I think everyone enjoyed themselves.

This month, we recognize Patty Dubey who will be retiring as Town Clerk on January 5th after 25 years of service with the Town. Please feel free to wish Patty well at Town Hall in the next few weeks. I have appointed Laurie Shaw, who is currently the Assistant Town Clerk in Natick to be the next Town Clerk in Westford. We welcome Laurie to Town Hall on her first day, January 8, 2024. Laurie and I will be out and about in the community in the coming months so you have a chance to meet her.

On December 8th, I issued two [FY25 Budgets](#) to the Select Board and presented them on December 12th. This year's presentation was different from previous years. Based upon known budget challenges, the Select Board asked that we prepare two different budget scenarios. The School Committee asked the Superintendent to do the same. The first option stays within the constraints of Proposition 2 ½ that includes difficult decisions that contemplate service cuts and staff reductions. The second option is a budget that reflects current service levels and staffing that would require a Proposition 2 ½ override.

(continued on next page)



Watch
westford **CAT**
community access television
www.westfordcat.org

WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV

The FY25 budget deficit is not anticipated to get any better in FY26 and FY27. In fact, there is a cascading effect to the budget gap that will lead to further cuts that is shown in the budget presentation. We do anticipate seeing some relief during the end of FY26 and beginning of FY27 if the Town adopts MBTA zoning and developers start to build associated with that zoning as well as seeing the effects of an Economic Development consultant that is anticipated to be hired in the late winter of 2024.

We have prepared a variety of educational [videos](#) that portray the budget challenges we are facing and how we are responding to those challenges.

Discussions regarding the FY25 budget do not stop when the first document is presented to the Select Board on Tuesday night, they will continue through the month of March. Budget Hearings with the Town of Westford Finance Committee and Select Board will occur during the month of January into early February. As always, the final approval of the town budget takes place at Town Meeting which is scheduled for March 23, 2024. If an override is approved at Town Meeting it must also be passed via ballot question on the townwide election day, May 7, 2024. Please remain engaged in the process and aware of the conversations taking place.

If you have not been able to access and read the full [Budget Task Force Report](#), I would encourage you to do so as it presents a significant amount of data and analysis that has been much needed. The more informed everyone is about the budget the better.

Please see below for matters that were discussed or acted upon by the Select Board in the past month.

At their meeting on November 28, 2023, it was announced that the Bootstrap Compost Program would begin on December 1, 2023. More information can be found on their [website](#). It was also announced that the Clerk's Office would begin Dog Licensing for 2024 beginning December 1, 2023.

A request from the Monuments and Memorials Committee to establish a bronze plaque memorial at Freedom Park in honor of Francis Michael Sullivan was approved. Mr. Sullivan grew up on Pond Street in Forge Village and worked to draft and advocate for the GI Bill of Rights, which was passed and signed by President Roosevelt in 1944.

A continuation of ARPA funding requests for Town Meeting equipment was discussed, and the Select Board approved with a 4-0 vote to fund 800 additional electronic voting devices for \$26,850, a 2-way audio visual system for \$18,695 and 6 additional poll pads for \$9,500.

During the Board Reports/Updates, John Cunningham announce the Multi-Family Housing Advisory Committee would be meeting on November 30, 2023, at the Boston Road Fire Department at 7:00PM. Kristen Las reminded residents about the MBTA Communities survey of Housing Needs for Adults aged 55 and Older will remain open until December 4, 2023, and encouraged residents to participate.

At their meeting on December 12, 2023, the Select Board congratulated Patty Dubey on her retirement from the Town Clerk's Office and recognized her 25 years of service to the Town of Westford. They also congratulated Ellen Apicco on her retirement from the J.V. Fletcher Library after 26 years of service. It was announced that the Communications Advisory Committee would be holding a public hearing on December 13, 2023 at 7:00PM to discuss the Cable TV contracts. John Cunningham announced the MBTA Communities meeting would be held December 14, at 7PM at Town Hall to present and discuss the draft of the bylaw agenda.

(continued on next page)

During a public hearing, the Select Board approved the request to reduce the 25-mph speed limit from 44 Boston Road to the Town Common, and Griffin Road.

The Town Manager presented the [FY25 Budget](#) to the Select Board, Finance Committee and School Committee.

The Select Board approved the request to open the [Annual Town Meeting Warrant](#) , which will be held on Saturday, March 23, 2024.

There are several openings on our local boards and committees, including:

Affordable Housing Trust

Agricultural Commission

Board of Assessors

Bylaw Review Committee

Capital Planning Committee

Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee

Commission on Disability

Community Behavioral and Mental Health Committee

Council on Aging

Cultural Council

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Dog Park Task Force

Healthy Westford Committee

Housing Authority

MBTA Communities Multi-Family Housing

Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative

Parks and Recreation Commission

Permanent Town Building Committee

Scholarship and Grant Committee

Selectmen Policies & Procedures Sub Committee

Tax Possession Disposition Committee

I urge you to peruse our website for information about the work of these committees; and if you have interest, please complete and submit a Citizen's Activity form at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#).

Would you like more detailed information on the Select Board's meetings? Click the following links to access: [Select Board Documents](#) & [Select Board Meeting Videos](#).

If you have any suggestions for articles or added features in future newsletters, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Town Manager's office at (978)-692-5501 or email at klas@westfordma.gov.

Sincerely,



Kristen Las, Town Manager



Selectboard members Thomas Clay, John Cunningham, along with Technology Department Director, Mike Wells, prepare breakfast at the Cameron Center.

From the Moderator



Since our last Town Meeting many people have been hard at work on improving conditions for a large number of voters to participate at future meetings. After study and recommendation by the IT Department, the Town Clerk's office and Westford CAT, the Select Board voted to approve ARPA funds for the purchase of 800 additional voting clickers, 6 new voter check in poll pads and permanent installation of a two-way audiovisual system between the gym and auditorium at WA. These enhancements are now underway and will provide for comfortable, informed participation by up to 1600 voters. To put that number in perspective, in the last thirty years there have been 48 town meetings

held in Westford at which we have averaged 381 voters. Of that number there were four meetings with more than 1,000 voters in attendance including our largest meeting with 1,231 voters in 1995. For comparison, approximately 2,000 people vote at the ballot box in our local elections. If in the future we see that more than 1,200 voters are participating on a regular basis (a great problem to have!) then we will look into adding another room at Westford Academy to handle the overflow.

Other town officials are working on alleviating the parking problems we experienced in October. These discussions include finding additional appropriate and convenient parking with reasonable access to and from the meeting for times when the WA parking lot is full, and creating a system to notify the voters on what is available for parking in real time. In addition, we are developing outreach to the voters concerning the specifics of how town meeting works and why its success depends on us all agreeing to and following certain principles of behavior that allow the meeting to proceed fairly and efficiently. More to come on those two items.

Annual Town Meeting is set to take place on Saturday, March 23 at Westford Academy. As we prepare for that meeting we will continue to sort out the procedural issues raised at the last meeting in an effort to allow every voter who takes the time to join the meeting to do so with a minimum of inconvenience and a maximum of reward, in this manner encouraging them to return to future meetings - because more participation equals better democracy. See you at the next meeting!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW – ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MARCH 23, 2024 STARTING AT 9 AM

Angela Harkness
Westford Town Moderator

Westford Public Schools

Budget season is upon us and this coming Monday evening, December 4, I will be presenting the FY25 WPS Budget recommendations to the School Committee. Before doing that, I wanted to reach out to all of you to provide additional background information as to how this year's presentation will be different. Following the work of the Town of Westford Budget Task Force, which presented their report earlier in the fall, the School Committee asked that we prepare two different budget scenarios just as the Select Board is asking the Town Manager to do. The first scenario will be articulating our identified needs in order to maintain the high quality programming and services that WPS is known for and contributes to the reputation of the community. The second scenario will articulate the difficult decisions and reductions that will be necessary if additional funding is not available and our budget must be balanced within Proposition 2 ½ constraints.

The budget challenges for FY25 have been well documented and communicated through the work of the Budget Task Force. There are significant challenges for both the Town and Schools. In developing our budget for FY24, we identified three major increases that would have to be funded in our WPS FY25 budget. The first being the statewide 14% increase in Special Education Tuitions. The second being ensuring competitive pay for our staff in a market where many of our contracts had not kept pace with our comparable districts. The third being the anticipated increase of transportation costs as we are obligated to go out to bid for our next bus contract and our surrounding districts have seen an average increase of 11% in costs. Those three buckets combine to an additional (\$4,975,242) needed to support our district needs for FY25.

These needs resulted in an anticipated FY25 increase of 8.18% (\$5,389,766) where our budget increases for the past two years have been at 2.89% (\$2,531,083).

So, the first scenario that will be presented will include efficiencies based on adjustments made for enrollment as well as reconsidering how some services and supports are provided. It is a level-service budget although some services will look different or be provided in a different manner. It will reflect a change in our needs request from the anticipated 8.18% increase identified during the Budget Task Force process to a 7% increase.

The second scenario identifies the impact of balancing the budget within Proposition 2 ½ constraints. Working with our town partners, a 2% target increase was identified for the schools to try and meet. In order to do that, we have identified 3.2 million dollars of reductions and changes which is the difference between the 7% increase recommendation and the 2% increase target. There are no recommendations within that scenario with which we are comfortable.

We will be discussing the budgets over the next few months. Please remain engaged in the process and aware of the conversations taking place. The first round takes place at the School Committee meetings and then conversations move into the Budget Hearings with the Town of Westford Finance Committee and Select Board. As always, the final approval of the town budgets takes place at Town Meeting which is scheduled for March 23, 2024 this year. If an override is approved at Town Meeting it must also be passed via ballot question on the townwide election day, May 7, 2024. So, many questions about FY25 will not be completely resolved until much later in the spring.

If you have not been able to access and read the [full Budget Task Force report](#), I would encourage you to do so as it presents a significant amount of data and analysis that has been much needed. The more informed everyone is about the budget the better.

Sincerely,

Chris

Christopher Chew, Ed. D
Superintendent
Westford Public Schools



Land Use Management Department

MBTA Communities Bylaw Public Hearing to Begin January 8, 2024

The Planning Board will be starting their public hearing process to review the proposed bylaw language and overlay district areas to bring Westford into compliance with the State's mandate pertaining to multi-family housing. Information about the State's requirements and the process that the Town has followed to get this point in the development of the proposed bylaw can be found on the Town of Westford's website at: <https://www.westfordma.gov/1591/MBTA-Communities-Multi-family-Housing-Ad>. Additionally, you're welcome to contact the Land Use Management Department either by emailing us at planningboard-staff@westfordma.gov or by calling at 978-692-5524 to set up some time to discuss this proposed bylaw.

Multi-Family Housing Zoning requirement for MBTA Communities in Massachusetts

A new state law (M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3A) requires that all 177 MBTA Communities (including Westford) have a zoning district that allows multi-family housing as-of-right.



- In order to comply with this state law, Town Staff have worked with an advisory committee (MCMAC) and held several public meetings in order to understand the community's housing needs and develop a proposal to meet those needs.
- The district must be created by December 2024, or Westford is no longer eligible for certain state grants *and* will risk liability under State and Federal housing laws per the Attorney General: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/advisory-concerning-enforcement-of-the-mbta-communities-zoning-law/download>.
- It is important to point out that there is no requirement that these units are constructed. As there are many factors that influence development opportunities such as the availability of land, adequacy of utilities, etc., to comply with this new law, the Town's Zoning Bylaws simply cannot be *the barrier* to multi-family housing development occurring.
- There are many benefits to multi-family housing development that the Town may realize if the bylaw is carefully created. We encourage you to participate and help the Town put together the best possible bylaw for Westford.



10 Tips For Sustaining Your Recovery Journey During The Holidays



Holidays can be stressful, be prepared during this holiday season by following these 10 helpful tips!

WHEN OUR BASIC NEEDS ARE UNMET, WE MAY BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS USE THE HALT ACRONYM TO CHECK IN WITH YOUR SELF.

ARE YOU (H)UNGRY

MAKE IT A POINT TO EAT REGULARLY. SKIPPING MEALS CAN AFFECT BLOOD SUGAR, WHICH IN TURN, CAN AFFECT MOOD.

ARE YOU (A)NGRY

DON'T FORGET TO EXERCISE, MEDITATE, LISTEN TO MUSIC, GO OUTSIDE, ENJOY HEALTHY ACTIVITIES.

ARE YOU (L)ONELY

MAKE A LIST OF FRIENDS/FAMILY WHO YOU CAN REACH OUT TO WHEN YOU ARE FEELING DOWN.

ARE YOU (T)IRED

THE HOLIDAY SEASON CAN BE BUSY AND INCLUDE LATE NIGHTS MAKE SURE YOU ARE GETTING 8 HOURS OF SLEEP TO DECREASE IRRITABILITY AND EXHAUSTION.

<p>SEEK OUT RECOVERY SUPPORT. JOIN A GROUP/MEETING. SEARCH FOR A RECOVERY APP.</p>	<p>PLAN AND CREATE ACTIVITIES THAT DO NOT REVOLVE AROUND ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG USE. TRY ICE SKATING, DECORATING COOKIES, OR WATCHING MOVIES, BOARD GAMES.</p>	<p>BE PREPARED WITH YOUR ANSWER/ELEVATOR SPEECH: TALK ABOUT YOUR SOBRIETY OR DON'T. BE READY TO ANSWER WHEN SOMEONE PASSES YOU A SUBSTANCE OR WHEN SOMEONE HAS A QUESTION.</p>
<p>WRITE YOUR OWN PERSONAL PLAN/GUIDE TO STAYING SOBER OVER THE HOLIDAYS . SHARE YOUR PLAN/GUIDE WITH OTHERS YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH.</p>	<p>ASK FOR SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS OR FAMILY MEMBERS . HAVE A SOBER BUDDY JOIN YOU AT HOLIDAY PARTIES. HAVE AN ACCOUNTABILITY BUDDY.</p>	<p>VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME AND GIVE BACK TO OTHERS.</p>
<p>BRING RECOVERY MATERIALS OR RESOURCES THAT CAN SUPPORT YOU WHEN TRAVELING. BRINGING YOUR FAVORITE RECOVERY BOOK, PODCAST, MUSIC ITEMS THAT WILL KEEP YOU ON TRACK.</p>	<p>CREATE AN EXIT PLAN IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU MAY HAVE AN URGE TO USE.</p>	<p>PRACTICE POSITIVITY AND GRATITUDE. WRITE DOWN 3 THINGS EVERY DAY YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR. PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-TALK DAILY.</p>

FUNDED BY THE GLHA OF CHNA 10 GRANT

BURIED IN TREASURES WORKSHOPS

GOT TOO MUCH STUFF?
NEED TO DOWNSIZE?



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Westford Health Department



- Are there stacks of paper in nearly every corner of your house?
- Are your closets, cupboards and other storage areas overflowing with stuff?
- Is it difficult to use your kitchen or bathroom utility areas?
- Do you struggle with letting things go?
- Do more items come into the home than go out?
- Does it take a long time to find a particular item or important document in your house?
- Are you embarrassed to have someone come into your home? Do you want to declutter but are overwhelmed on where to begin?

If you can answer 'yes' to one or more of these questions, then our 15-week (in-person) Buried in Treasures (BIT) Workshop may be for you. This is a relaxed, non-judgmental program that teaches you how to build insight, skills and strategies to help declutter, get organized and reduce acquiring. The program addresses all clutter levels from just a few messy areas, to excessive collecting, to hoarding tendencies/disorder.

Workshop starts: Jan 11th, 2024
Workshop will be held once a week
on Thursdays (for 15 weeks)
Time: 1PM-3PM
Where: Westford Council on Aging
Cost: Class & workbook are FREE
Open to Westford MA residents



PLEASE EMAIL BRITTANY NASH, BNASH@WESTFORDMA.GOV WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR TO REGISTER (THIS WILL BE A CLOSED GROUP; YOU MUST REGISTER IN ADVANCE). SPONSORED BY THE WESTFORD HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS DEPARTMENT HOSTED AT THE WESTFORD COUNCIL ON AGING.

2023
MERRIMACK VALLEY SUBSTANCE
USE DISORDER RESOURCE GUIDE

SCAN ME



DOWNLOAD THE RESOURCE GUIDE BY
SCANNING THE QR CODE!

HOLIDAY RESOURCES

You are not alone during the Holidays.

Recovery Dharma

<https://recoverydharma.org/>

Recovery Dharma uses Buddhist practice and principles to heal the suffering caused by all types of addiction. It is an international community of people who host and participate in weekly meetings to support our sobriety and wellbeing through meditation, self-inquiry, and sharing.

Alcoholic Anonymous (Virtual)

<https://www.aa.org/meeting-guide-app>

A confidential fellowship from anywhere! A variety of resources are available during this holiday and beyond.

Narcotics Anonymous

<https://www.na.org>

NA is a fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. The link will provide you with information on in-person and online meetings!

SMART Recovery

<https://www.smartrecovery.org/holidays-challenges-to-addiction-recovery/>

Their goal is to empower people to achieve independence from addiction problems with a science-based 4-Point Program. Visit the web page to get more information and see what it is all about.

988 Suicide and Crisis Line

<https://988lifeline.org>

When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.

Depression & Anxiety Support Group

Depression & Anxiety Support Group sessions are held at the Chelmsford Center for the Arts (CCA) every 4th Tuesday of the month from 6:30pm-8pm in the Cabaret room. This group allows a safe space for adults 18 and older to discuss the hardships of their anxiety and depression and learn different ways they can cope. This group is run by the Chelmsford Health Department and a licensed facilitator. Registration is preferred, but not required. For questions or to register, call 978-250-5241.

Decembers date will be different and falls on the 19th

Community Contacts

Billerica

Mike Higgins

mhiggins@town.billerica.ma.us

978-671-0943

Chelmsford

Taryn Angel

tangel@chelmsfordma.gov

978-250-5241

Lowell

Devin Gilmore

dgilmore@lowellma.gov

978-674-1078

Tyngsborough

Ashley Pavlakos

apavlakos@teWKsbury-ma.gov

Tewksbury

Maria Ruggiero

mruggiero@teWKsbury-ma.gov

978-382-4989

Westford & Dracut

Brittany Nash

bnash@westfordma.gov

978-399-2564

Wilmington

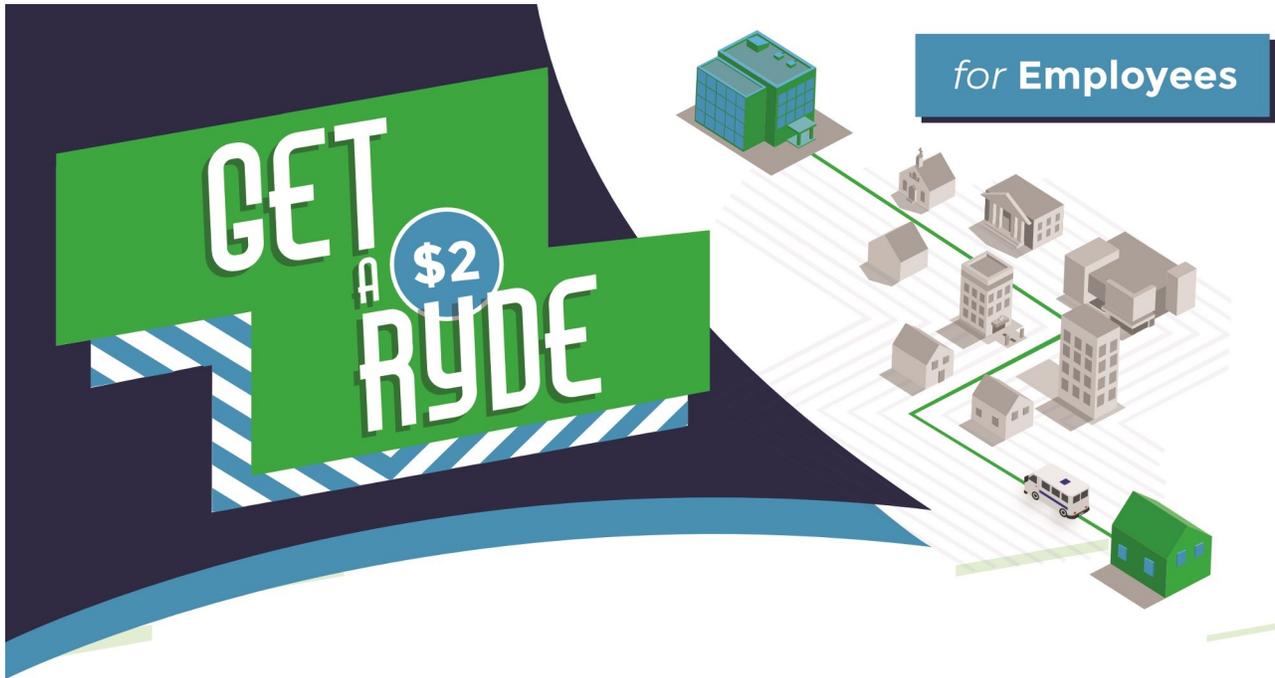
Samantha Cavanaugh

scavanaugh@wpd.org

978-694-2064



PREVENTION PARTNERS OF
NORTHERN MIDDLESEX
REGIONALPPNM



Transportation from Home to Work and Back!



Low cost



Easy Booking



Reliable Service



**GREATER LOWELL
WORKFORCE BOARD**

Mon-Fri, 7am to 5pm

BOOK BY

(888) 575-6676

- Lowell
- Chelmsford
- Westford
- Dunstable

- Tyngsboro
- Billerica
- Tewksbury
- Dracut

YOUR MAP TO A FOOD-SAFE HOLIDAY

Follow some simple food safety advice to keep you and your guests feeling festive this winter.

PROPER PREPPING

Just as you have a procedure for storing your holiday gifts when you get home, you should have a system for storing your food.

Make sure your fridge is set at or below **40 °F**
Chill perishable groceries within two hours of shopping

Store raw meats in a container or dish to prevent juices from leaking and set below ready-to-eat foods.

Wash your hands for **20 SECONDS** with warm water and soap!

Be sure to separate raw meat from ready-to-eat foods and dishes.

Don't forget: You need two thermometers. One for the fridge to ensure food is stored at 40 °F. One for food, particularly meat, to ensure it's cooked to the right temperature.

WELCOME TO Roastville

Always use a food thermometer to check that different holiday meats have been cooked to the right internal temperature.

- GROUND BEEF 160 °F
- DUCK 165 °F
- TURKEY 165 °F
- GOOSE 165 °F
- VEAL* 145 °F
- PORK* 145 °F
- LAMB* 145 °F
- STEAK* 145 °F

YIELD

*Don't forget resting time! Beef, veal, lamb, and pork should rest for **3 MINUTES** before carving or consuming.

HITTING THE ROAD

If you're bringing a dish to a get-together with coworkers, family or friends this holiday season, make sure you are transporting food safely.

40 °F

140 °F

DANGER ZONE



Perishable food kept in the Danger Zone (between 40 - 140 °F) for longer than 2 hours should be thrown out.

140 °F + 40 °F = 2 hours

KEEP COLD FOOD COLD
When transporting cold dishes, place items in a cooler with ice or gel packs to keep food at or below **40 °F**

KEEP HOT FOOD HOT
Keep hot foods at or above **140 °F** by wrapping dishes in insulation bags or towels and newspaper.

EXCEPTIONS to Danger Zone include ready-to-eat items like cookies, crackers, bread, whole fruit

Making a List, Checking it Twice:

Top Tips for Celebrating Safely this Holiday Season



Toys

- Follow safety information on packages, and choose toys that match your child's abilities.
- Get safety gear and ensure it's worn properly at all times and sized to fit.
- Keep small balls and toys with small parts away from children younger than age 3.



Cooking

- Never leave food unattended on the stove or in the oven.
- Keep flammable items away from the stove and oven.
- Fry a turkey outside only, and away from your home and do not overfill the oil in the turkey fryer.



Decorating

- Keep your live Christmas tree well-watered and look for the "Fire Resistant" label when buying an artificial tree.
- Place burning candles away from flammable items, and blow them out before leaving the room.
- Only use lights tested for safety and throw out sets with broken sockets, or frayed wires.



United States
Consumer Product Safety Commission



CPSC.gov
USCPSC



NSN-01-112023

December / January at the J.V. Fletcher Library

Unless otherwise noted, the following programs are made possible by the Friends of the Library.



J.V. FLETCHER
LIBRARY

Widening Westford's World

Director's Corner: Let the Library help you save money this holiday season and support all your festive plans! Check out our cookbooks [Cookies! Pies! Appetizers!], décor magazines, Christmas idea books and craft books to assist in planning your festivities! Classic holiday DVDs and holiday CDs are yours for the borrowing (or traveling!). If you prefer to download or stream music, movies, audiobooks, etc. be sure to check out Freegal, Hoopla, and Kanopy. For more information, visit [E-Collections](#). Watch for our holiday programs and Library Christmas ornament! Best of the holiday season to you and yours as you honor your own celebratory traditions!

Virtual MA Library Collaborative Job Search Help For 50 & Over –Creating A Marketing Plan and Brief: Wed., Dec. 20 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Due to the upcoming holidays, there will be a morning ([Register Here](#)) and an evening ([Register Here](#)) session on December 20. If you are unemployed and actively looking, underemployed, seeking a new career direction, re-entering the job market after a long employment gap, or recently retired and looking for your "Encore Career", this networking group program is perfect for you!

Mystery Book Club: Monday, December 18 at 2:00 p.m. in the Mary Atwood Room: Wake up your week with a stimulating book club discussion! We'll meet in the Mary Atwood Room to discuss *Spirit of Steamboat* by Craig Johnson. Print copies are available at the Main Desk.

Holiday Crafternoon: Monday, December 18 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Come to the Meeting Room for some crafting! We'll have gift bags to decorate and supplies for card-making. Registration is appreciated, but drop-ins are always welcome. For grade 6 and up. [Register here.](#)

Pajama Story Time: Monday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. Pajama Time meets once a month on a Monday evening in the Meeting Room for children ages 3 to 7. Wear your pajamas and bring a favorite stuffed animal or blanket! No registration required.

A Gathering of Celtic and Christmas: Wednesday, December 20 at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room: Jeff Snow will perform "A Gathering of Celtic and Christmas", a mix of his show "The Softer Side of Celtic" along with familiar and perhaps not so familiar Christmas songs and tunes. Growing up as the son of a drummer in a Bagpipe band and in a home where older Celtic songs were the everyday sounds, Jeff developed a love for the music of Scotland, England and Ireland. His concerts have been described as "quiet and relaxing" and much of it is, but sometimes he'll break out and the foot stomping begins. The magical sounds from the instruments coupled with vocals and Jeff's love and knowledge of his Scottish heritage create a delightful program of traditional and original tunes and songs. [Register here.](#)

7th Annual 9-Hole Mini Golf in the Library: Wednesday, December 27 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Here is something to do with the whole family during the holiday break: visit out traditional a nine hole (and a bonus hole) mini-golf course that starts in the Meeting room and goes all over the library! This free drop-in program is generously funded by the KDK Memorial Foundation (in honor of Kurt Kelly). The course starts in the Meeting Room. No sign up, no time slots - come when you can any time between 11 and 2 and play nine holes. This program is generously funded by the KDK Foundation in honor of Kurt Kelly.

(Continued on next page)

J.V. Fletcher Library (continued)

Youth Services Book Club Online Registration: Monday, January 8 at 6:30 p.m. [Online registration](#) for these popular book club programs opens the evening of Jan. 8 at 6:30 p.m. Book clubs are open to Westford residents and non-resident Friends of the J.V. Fletcher Library. Book clubs are for grades Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, and 4 and 5 (combined) and meet once a month from 4 to 4:45 p.m. The Art Book Club is for kids in grade 3 and 4 and meets once a month on a Thursday afternoon. The Graphic Novel Book Club is for grades 4 and 5 and meets once a month on a Monday afternoon.

Please note that book clubs will happen in the large Meeting Room downstairs for the winter session.

Bizarre Birds: Thursday, January 4 at 6:30 p.m. in the Meeting Room:

With over 10,000 bird species in the world, there are some extreme examples that stretch our understanding of what it means to be a bird. This entertaining and educational program features extreme examples of birds and bird biology. Presented by Dr. Steve Hale of "Open World Explorers".

[Register here.](#)

*The J.V. Fletcher Library's
award-winning tree at the
Festival of Trees
held at the Westford Regency.*

*The ABC tree is decorated
in honor of Ellen Apicco who is retiring
from the Youth Services Department
after 26 years of outstanding service.*



Friends of the Library e-newsletter: The best way to learn about our upcoming programs and new services is through the FOL weekly e-newsletter. [Sign up here.](#)

Check out our [Museum Passes page](#) or call the Library for reservations. Unless otherwise noted, our museum passes are generously funded by the Friends of the Library. [Have you joined the Friends yet?](#)

Quick Links to Our Most Popular Services!

[Programs – Adults](#)

[Programs – Kids](#)

[Programs – Young Adults](#)

Follow us!

<https://www.instagram.com/westfordlibraryma/>

<https://twitter.com/westfordlibrary>

<https://www.facebook.com/J-V-Fletcher-Library-131093656901445/>

If you have questions or need assistance, please call us at 978-399-2300 or send us an email at westfordlibrary@westfordma.gov.

Cameron Senior Center

Merry and Happy Days at the Cameron

Join us!

COOKIES BY THE FIREPLACE

Thursday, December 21st at 10 am

Join Katie in the library by the fireplace and enjoy some hot cocoa and cookies!

Call to sign up at 978.692.5523.

Thank you to our Sponsors Muffin on Main



BURIED IN TREASURE (BIT) WORKSHOP

Begins Thursday, January 11th 1:00 – 3:00 pm, 15 weeks

This is a relaxed, nonjudgmental program that teaches you how to build insight, skills and strategies to help declutter, get organized and reduce acquiring. The program addresses all clutter levels, from just a few messy areas to excessive collecting to hoarding tendencies/ disorder.

Class and workbook are free. This will be a closed group; you must register in advance.

Facilitated by Brittany Nash, Gail Johnson and Nicole Laviolette

Registration – Brittany Nash, bnash@westfordma.gov or 978.399.2564.

Income Tax Help

Hal Schreiber will be back this year to complete your 2023 federal and state income tax returns. This is a free service sponsored by your Senior Center and there are no age or income limits. Please call the Senior Center at 978-692-5523 to add your name, address, telephone number, and email address to the list for having your tax return prepared. Hal has all the federal and state tax forms that are needed to be filled out. You can drop off your tax information at the Senior Center or at Hal's home. If you call Hal (978-692-7906) and get the answering machine, it is important that you leave a message, speak slowly, and give your name and telephone number.

*Please call the Cameron to schedule your appointment at 978-692-5523.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Wednesday, December 20th at 12:00 pm

Baked Potato Bar Enjoy a birthday dessert after lunch as we celebrate our birthday celebrants with a robust round of singing. To register please call 978.692.5523.

Cost: \$5 and Birthday celebrant lunch is free.



(Continued on next page)

Cameron Senior Center (continued)

SAND BUCKETS (FREE)

If you need a free bucket of sand to be delivered to your home for the coming winter months, please call 978-692-5523 to get on the list. Many thanks to the Westford Police for providing this service.

GAMES and BINGO

Come join us at the Cameron for the following games:

Hand and Foot on Thursdays at 12:30PM

Bridge on Thursdays at 2:00PM

Ping Pong Mondays and Tuesdays at 2PM and Friday s at 9:30AM

Monday BINGO at 1:00 PM. Join us for some BINGO fun! \$1 to buy a colored dobber.

\$3 per paper BINGO sheet that has three BINGO games on a card.

Also, don't forget to bring quarters for Hot Ball Game.



NEW YEAR'S LUNCH

Wednesday, January 10 at 12 pm

Join us for a New Year's Lunch to welcome

in the New Year! Donna Dutton will be preparing traditional ham, potatoes, and her broccoli salad for us to enjoy as we celebrate the start of 2024!

Cost is \$5. RSVP at 978.692.5523

To learn more about the Cameron Senior Center programs and services please visit:

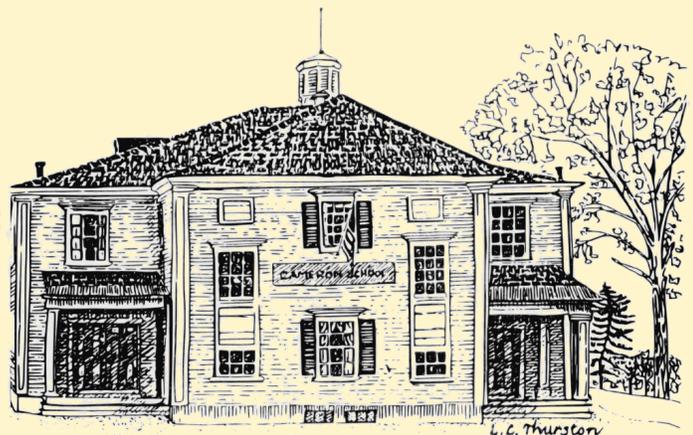
www.westfordma.gov/coa,

[www.facebook.com/Cameron Senior Center/](https://www.facebook.com/CameronSeniorCenter/)

Or please feel free to call us at 978-692-5523.

To view the complete Council On Aging Newsletter please visit our website:

www.westfordma.gov/coa and click on [Newsletters](#).



Westford Senior Center



Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee

Westford Climate Action (WCA) presents **“Neighbor to Neighbor: Solar Energy 101,”** a free, in-person **and** online event on **Thursday, January 18, 7:00 pm, at the J. V. Fletcher Library, 50 Main Street, Westford.** The evening will include a comprehensive overview of rooftop solar systems by a WCA member as well as Westford residents sharing their experiences with going solar. A question and answer session will follow.

Topics covered will include:

- how solar panels work
- components of a home solar system
- backup batteries and solar
- solar system energy production
- how home solar saves money
- available tax credits
- buying vs renting a solar system, from initial quotes to an operational system



This seminar is also sponsored by the Westford Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee, Westford's Sustainability Coordinator, and the J. V. Fletcher Library.

[For online registration, please click here.](#)
Or go to WestfordClimateAction.org/events/

No registration is needed for in-person attendance at the library.

Sustainability Update- Sue Thomas, [Sustainability Coordinator](#), 978-399-2798

Data and Policy Updates:

- ✓ The final agreement at the **U.N. Climate Change Conference** in Dubai, known as **COP28**, explicitly recommends “transitioning away from fossil fuels” that are dangerously heating the Earth. Countries also committed to triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030, which while less publicized, may actually have more impact.
- ✓ Many data points indicate we are already establishing alarming new normals:
 - This [MIT study](#) indicates the planet will reach an average temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius **in 6 months**
 - [NOAA](#) forecasts similar permanent changes
 - Last month, for the first time that I am aware of, the USDA updated the [Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#) used by food producers and gardeners to reflect current growing conditions
 - [US oil production is at an all-time high](#) , but it should be noted the same report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration expects “solar and wind generation together in 2024 to overtake electric power generation from coal for the first year ever” most likely thanks to government incentives and dropping prices related to bringing renewables online.
- ✓ The Commonwealth is taking [measures to move our energy infrastructure off natural gas](#), the access and price of which underpins our expensive winter energy market as well as our CO2 emissions
- ✓ The Biden Administration has announced [standards to reduce methane pollution](#), a more potent warming gas than CO2
- ✓ Many organizations are taking measures to restore habitat in the Commonwealth like [Mass Wildlife](#).
- ✓ The Town of Arlington has started an [interesting initiative](#) to address the single use product crisis with returnable take out containers.

Municipal Work

In town, like people at home, we are thinking about our [budget](#), applying for grants and rebates, making our town infrastructure more energy efficient, [examining zoning](#), contemplating when to adopt [building codes](#) in support of our climate goals in line with our neighbors, making it easy for you to reduce your solid waste through [composting](#) with Bootstrap [and to recycle everything](#), and examining our fleet and small engine options through the capital planning process.

YOU! The most powerful piece of the policy and climate puzzle!

As you celebrate the holidays and rejoice in the coming return of light, greenery and the growing season, I hope you will find both hope and inspiration in knowing that you can and do make a difference not only in the lives of those you love, but also in the lives of everyone and everything around the world. What you do, and as often, what you choose not to do, has an outsized impact, and each of us, more than any organization or government, [holds the power to be the change we seek through our example](#). Please keep this in mind as you make your resolutions and plans for the new year!

Thank you for coming out to the Westford Academy Holiday Bazaar. I loved hearing your updates on your projects to reduce your climate footprint over the last year and brainstorming ideas for the future, including induction cooking.



(Continued on next page)

Sustainability (Continued)

Gift Giving – for you, your loved ones and the planet, with some helpful “discounts”

- ✓ Remember what you and your loved ones really want for the holidays and don't be afraid to opt out of a purchase that may not suit that goal.
- ✓ Shipping is never free in terms of carbon, but if you have missed those cheaper shipping deadlines this week, don't worry, sustainable and great gifting are still within your reach. Consider [these gift ideas](#) that come with only happy returns.
- ✓ You might also tuck a promise into a creative reusable wrap (a dish cloth for an induction stove, for example) and go pick out a new present for the new year together. Tax incentives are available to nudge you to do the energy conscious thing in addition to the year over year savings. [Here is an analysis of what to buy now vs in January](#) to access the most federal money for your durable goods purchases. Additional state money is available from [Mass Save](#).
- ✓ Gifts to charity are also an option, for your loved ones and the planet, just forego the plush or other items they give you unless you or the recipient will truly treasure those items. Their life cycle cost in carbon far exceeds their value in most cases for most people. While fewer people can get a tax deduction for charity now than in the past, don't forget to check if you qualify for this three-fer.

Borrow, Don't buy: Libraries of Things:

Most libraries are building collections called “libraries of things” to eliminate the need for everyone in town to own something they use infrequently. The JV Fletcher library has a [Kill A Watt EZ electricity usage monitor](#) you may borrow to check the energy efficiency of your appliance or the quality of the power provided to your home, as well as a [telescope](#), to check out the [Geminids](#) meteor shower, which rarely disappoints. They also have [hotspots](#). Additions to the collection are on hold until after the library renovation is completed, but the consortium allows you to borrow from out of town. The Carlisle Library, for example, has an [induction cooktop](#) in their library of things that you may borrow.

2024 Events for the Solar Curious, Climate learner/weather watcher, and gardener/landscaper

- Understanding the power, and shopping reassurance of local precedent, Westford Climate Action, the Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee and I are hosting the second **Neighbor to Neighbor event on Solar on January 19th at the JV Fletcher Library at 7:00 PM.**
- Local Meteorologist Harvey Leonard will be giving a talk entitled **Climate Change: Simple, Serious, Solvable** sponsored by the [Middlesex Conservation District](#) on Tuesday, January 23rd, at 3:00 p.m at the First Parish Church.
- Grow Native Massachusetts has announced their [free 2024 Evenings with Experts](#) and a winter pruning workshop.

Best wishes for a joyous, sustainable and rejuvenating holiday season.

Community Wellness

Community Wellness Assistance

- Westford's Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette, is available the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 2:00 – 4:00 PM at the J.V. Fletcher Library, Mary Atwood Room. Get help with mental health referrals, substance use disorder referrals, parenting support resources, and linkages to other town and community resources.
- No appointment necessary. For questions, please email: nlaviolette@westfordma.gov or call 978-399-2503

Westford Mobile Clinician

- If you or a family member are experiencing a mental health challenge and currently awaiting care, Westford may be able to help through offering Mobile Clinician services. The Town of Westford acknowledges an overwhelming need for mental health appointments, resulting in long waitlists. We want to help shorten this wait time by offering short – term mobile clinical services in Town buildings to those in need.
- For more information – contact Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette

Energy Assistance Program Information:

With the increase of energy and heating costs the Town has created an informational document on local Energy Assistance Programs. Please visit the link that will bring you to the Community Wellness page, and you will find information on Energy Assistance resources. <https://westfordma.gov/1487/Community-Wellness>

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL)

- The Behavioral Health Help Line is available 24/7, 365 days per year and is available for all residents of Massachusetts. Call or text 833-773-2445. Visit the website to chat online at www.masshelpline.com.
- BHHL connects individuals and families to the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent and immediate crisis care.
- Call for real – time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right services.
- The BHHL is staffed by trained clinicians and certified peer specialists to support every caller's needs.
- The BHHL is available in more than 200 languages. Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing call also use the BHHL by contacting MassRelay at 711.
- The BHHL is free and available to all Massachusetts residents.

McLean Hospital

- McLean Hospital hosts a free virtual Mental Health and Well Being webinar series. The series offers a variety of topics including Managing Grief and Loss, The Link Between Social Media and Mental Health, Supporting Loved Ones Struggling with Addiction, Effectively Addressing Teen Anxiety and ADHD and many others.
- Join the free virtual sessions on mental health and well-being by registering at: <https://home.mcleanhospital.org/webinar-series>.
- You can get access to past presentations by clicking the link at the bottom of the page to sign up to access past webinars.

For more information about the Community Wellness Department,
please visit <https://westfordma.gov/1487/Community-Wellness>

Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette ~ 978-399-2503 ~ nlaviolette@westfordma.gov

Community Wellness (Continued)



GREATER LOWELL HEALTH ALLIANCE
PRESENTS

Together for the
Holidays

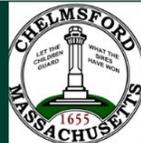
24 HOUR ZOOM SPACE

5PM December 24-5PM December 25

Looking for a safe space to 'go' for the holiday?
You will find friends here!

Contact: Kerrie D'Entremont for more information
kdentremont@greaterlowellhealthalliance.org or go to
www.greaterlowellhealthalliance.org for Zoom link

Special thanks to all those who made this possible and supporting organizations!



Town Clerk's Corner

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your Assistant Town Clerk for 19 years and as Town Clerk for the past 6 years. I will be retiring the first of the year. This is bittersweet for me, as I have truly loved my job and have enjoyed the people and many friendships that I have made over these 25 years. I am moving on to the next chapter of my life with a grandchild on the way, the chance to do some traveling with my husband, and new opportunities to serve the town on the Housing Authority and the Council on Aging.

Have a wonderful holiday season and a happy and healthy 2024!

~ Patty Dubey, Town Clerk

DATES TO REMEMBER IN 2024

Presidential Primary - Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Annual Town Meeting - Saturday, March 23, 2024

Town Election - Tuesday, May 7, 2024

State Primary - Tuesday, September 3, 2024

Special Town Meeting - October 2024

General Election - Tuesday, November 5, 2024

You may **apply** for a "vote by mail" ballot (no excuse) or you may **apply** for an absentee ballot by noon on day before the election. Remember absentee ballots are only available for those who meet the criteria and are unable to vote at the polls on election day. Any ballots voted by either of these methods must be received by 8 pm on Election Day to be counted.

Deadline to license your dog(s)

Dogs must be licensed by March 31, 2024 to avoid the \$25.00 late fee. Spayed or neutered dogs are \$15.00. Non altered dogs are \$20.00. Dog licensing has begun December 1st.

A reminder - We have a drop box for ballots, dog license requests, census forms and any other items for the Town Clerk's Office. It is located at the back door to Town Hall on the sidewalk leading to the Police Station. Access is available 24 hours a day. The box is securely locked and tamperproof.



(Continued on next page)

Town Clerk's Corner (Continued)

Not registered as a voter in Westford yet? It's easier than ever ... just go online! <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/>



When you register to vote, you may



- Register in a POLITICAL PARTY by selecting one of the listed parties (currently Democratic or Republican) OR
- Register in a political designation, OR
- Register with no party affiliation by selecting “NO PARTY (unenrolled),” which is commonly referred to as “independent” meaning that you do not have a party designation

If you do not enroll in a party (i.e., choose unenrolled or a political designation), you may still vote in state and presidential primaries by choosing a party ballot and will remain unenrolled. If you enroll in one of the parties listed above, you may vote only in that party's primary. In a general election, all voters receive the same ballot regardless of party enrollment.

OPEN POSITIONS FOR LOCAL OFFICE IN 2024

Never too early to be thinking about running for office. Nomination papers will be available January 2nd. The table below lists open seats for the May 7, 2024 Town Election. The deadline to file nomination papers bearing the signatures of at least 50 Westford voters is Tuesday, March 19th at 5:00pm.

Office	Number of Positions	Terms expiring for:	Length of term
Select Board	1	John H. Cunningham	3 years
Board of Health	1	Joanne E. Belanger	3 years
Housing Authority	1	Barbara Upperman	5 years
Housing Authority	1	Patricia Dubey	1 year
Library Trustees	2	Marianne C. Fleckner Deborah Teal	3 years
Planning Board	1	Michael Bonenfant	5 years
School Committee	3	Kathryn Clear Christopher P. Sanders Mingquan Zheng	3 years

Westford Recreation

Westford Partnership for Children (WPC), grades K-5, Register for Session 3 now

Recreation's WPC After School Program offers:

- A safe and easy transition from classroom to program.
- Your choice of activities and flexible schedules.
- An experienced, caring Site Director and staff.

WPC runs Monday-Friday, school dismissal to 6:00 p.m., with locations at Abbot, Crisafulli, Day, Miller, Nabnasset, and Robinson.

Register for any session, at any time.

Learn more at [About WPC](#) on westfordma.myrec.com.

Recreation Special Programs, grades K-8 December Break, December 26-29

Rec's program is full of fun activities that include crafts, sports and games, plus two great field trips. Enjoy **PJ's and Pancakes**, **Migration at the O'Neil Cinema**, and bowling and arcades at the **Acton Bowl-A-Drome**, plus more! Enrollment is open to Westford as well as other surrounding communities.

Learn more at [Special Programs](#) - westfordma.myrec.com.

Recreation Seasonal Programs Starting in January

Nitehawks Winter Track and Field with Coach Alex Ivanov, for grades K-4 and 5-8. **Winter Youth Chess** with US Open Women's Championship winner, Master Prathiba, for beginner and intermediate players, ages 5-14.

Exciting NEWS: Soccer Shots is joining us this spring!

Learn more at [Programs](#) - westfordma.myrec.com.

Energy abounds during December break!

Don't miss Rec's **December Break** with **Sports and Games, Bowling, Movies & Popcorn**, and hanging out with friends.



Sometimes you just have to bake, and a lots been baking at Westford Rec's WPC After School Program. Pretzel Web cookies are a Nabnasset favorite with Site Director Nick Adams and Site Leader Uma Purohit.

VISIT SOON: 65 Main Street, 3rd Floor, Westford, MA | 978-692-5523 | westfordma.myrec.com

Westford Recycling Commission

A Gift of your Time is the Greenest Gift



The holiday giving season is here. Sometimes we feel we need to hop online to buy something for someone, as an easy, gift-giving “fix”. It may even be something that’s not needed. And that item is packaged and shipped, burning away our natural resources in the process.

What if you could give a gift that doesn’t have to be ordered online? Or picked off a warehouse shelf somewhere? One that might just be a little kinder to our Mother Earth? How about giving of your time, or as some have put it, giving “experiences”? There are so many benefits! You’d be spending time with those you care about. And you may be helping someone check a task off their to-do list that’s been festering there forever.

Here are some ideas:

Our chilly New England fall weather makes a trip to a museum a good option. Your local library may have discount passes. At the [J.V. Fletcher Library in Westford](#), the most popular passes are to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Discovery Museum in Acton. For those, book ahead! Or choose to visit historic houses with the History New England Pass. Or go to the zoo with the Zoo New England Pass. Give an outing to a museum or zoo this holiday season to someone you love. And maybe you can go along with them.

We’re all procrastinators. And we have angst over our to-do lists with closets that need to be cleaned out, or rooms that need re-painting. Give someone a hand! How great would your “giftee” feel if you offered to help them with a project, so they could finally get it done? An afternoon spent organizing and a trip to Goodwill with boxes of items for others to enjoy. Or a day painting a room – one rolling, one trim-painting – it goes so much faster with two. It’s a win-win!

There are lots of other places to treat someone - a movie, a concert, a play. And it’s all enhanced by the gift of your time.

This holiday season, get greener and avoid packaging, shipping, and wasteful spending for unneeded items. Give a gift of yourself and your time instead.

Note: We are grateful for Kris Erickson’s efforts in updating this important message.



New Curbside Compost Program for Westford Residents

Westford is proud to announce residents can now sign up for a curbside compost program through Bootstrap Compost. Please go to their [website](#) to sign up. Existing customers can contact Bootstrap to convert their current plan to the aggregate town plan.

More information can also be found at <https://bootstrapcompost.com/weve-partnered-with-the-town-of-westford-to-offer-premium-curbside-service-at-a-new-low-rate/>

Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Repurpose, and Recycle!

MA resource for “What is Recyclable?” www.RecycleSmartMA.org.

The Mission of the Westford Recycling Commission is to:

Increase awareness of the financial and environmental impacts of recycling; provide opportunities for non-curbside recycling; educate residents on options to reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle; and organize recycling events that encourage diversion from the trash.

Westford Recycling Commission (Continued)**A Holiday Ode to Recycling Toters from Cascade Cart Solutions**

*In a world of snow and twinkly lights so bright,
Where hearts are warm on this silent, holy night,
Let's pause to see the beauty, even in the mundane,
For in the midst of winter, a tale of recycling toters we'll explain.*

*Beneath the moon's soft, shimmering silver sheen,
Line up the toters, all sturdy and serene,
Each one holds memories of days gone by,
Discarded treasures, now saying their goodbye.*

*In the dark of the night, they stand there still,
A testament to time, atop the snowy hill,
Their wheels firm in place, handles reaching high,
Guardians of our recycling, under the starry sky.*

From the paper to the boxes wide,
They collect the remnants of joy and holiday pride,
In each cart, a story of celebrations past,
Of laughter and love that will forever last.*

***Sorry, but no wrapping paper.**